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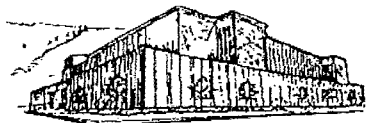
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Body of Glass

by

Grier Phillips

B.A. Roanoke College, USA 2001

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

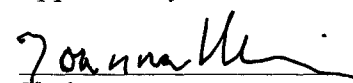
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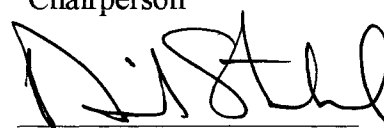
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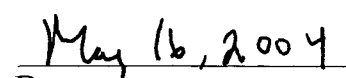
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An hour of waiting climbs the sky,  
empty, out of the sea that's turning grey.  
A cloud tree grows on the water,  
then crumbles like ashes.

Abent one, how I miss you on this shore  
that conjures you and fades if you're away:  
you're gone, so each thing strays  
from its furrow, topples, vanishes in haze.

- Eugenio Montale

## River Well

Hooked by hooked  
knot of bale, the light-  
rope pulled taut, still  
sounding inside the  
eye (admirable halt  
of concern) the living  
horse trembling, guddles  
for light beneath its own  
skin. We enter (that other  
world daily) death  
and return.

2



## The Equation of Hands

Toward the other  
hand is a space  
where clocks break  
from existence, the  
disappearing, now  
invisible zero since  
you were counted back  
to me like a fugue,  
keys of my spine fused  
to your finger-tips, the  
skinned space between  
white and raised-up-to-  
meet-you, becoming voids  
of air or boundary – you  
took your hand through  
my body the way  
a wandering child runs  
its hand through the glass  
top of a lake, casting  
its silver-skinned palms  
into gold oblivion of self –  
you ran your hand into  
the harmony of returning  
the scales that once built  
and weighed you  
as a separate thing.

## Crossing

The chandeliers are shaking and coming up from the sea, the horses running water from their backs. There is some gold light building a wood house upon the beach. The windows wait there, speaking up the house, and when they arrive there is only the sound of them shedding their exertion, settling around the house like lantern-flames, their head's sway sweeping down. Occasionally a young girl's china-boned ankle lifts a hoof like a bass line, then places it back upon the sand, the way a figure very heavy, very fragile is placed back upon the mantle.

Out from the windows the heavy drift – light swells upon their backs like barnacles. They lift their hooves like they lift their heads, knowing there is an army of water and one idea.

## Viridescent Window

The green house is green all-around. Green from the outside in. Like living within a green house of clear mirrors where green reflects in two, three, five, eight (pane after pane of pane-of-green), makes after itself, infinite-green. Standing, all-around, the house: Green. Still. Green lamp of green glass turned on in a clear forest.

## The Abandoned Lake

By the abandoned lake,  
a saddled horse stands,  
waiting for the return  
of weight and reins, the air  
from its nose is snowing.  
The world in an ancestor's  
chalice, the inhabitant sips in  
morning through bells, dark  
coffee, air of knives, while  
white waits in a glass  
beyond the wood door.  
Snow beneath snow  
speaking much more  
in silence, something new  
and familiar falls upon  
the slanted roof. A fresh  
thump, from the tree  
above, recalls a green  
leaf. It undoes all growth  
and tenderness inside  
the mind, it palettes white  
with green, fireflies thought  
with viridescence.

## Gradations of Light, Band

Gradations of light  
band around you as  
you move from tree  
to tree in the orchard of  
what-we-were and what-  
still: being that you move  
from pungent to pale, the slow  
removal of sea, the more  
increasing slow of forgetting  
how you came to each  
tree (path expunged), the  
needles that tucked you  
so neatly under their guide,  
waver the pallor of sky  
as it lifts from the sun,  
waver like the eye of  
I who looks back upon  
you, the same as when  
the trees collapse into the  
ground we no longer know.

## The Root of Hands

The white root, bare and downward,  
grows toward the rend from which  
you emerge, the once-toothed seam  
opened now by a finger, steady,  
then a hand that pulls up lanterns  
and signs to split this body of dark-  
ness that once was an arrow, and now  
is the arrow split. This air, pulled  
back, large enough to fit the body  
in, is exhaling its breath to fit  
the small, diminishing size of  
you: To the geode of green  
at night, you go, white  
roots strung up around you.

## The Still-Of-Yourself

Called yourself, you hold  
still while the still-of-  
yourself is holding in round  
repose. Early sunlight  
calls itself through,  
like bending down to  
the well, drawing up from  
the bottom, like your  
own voice waking  
you, clear light rising  
from the well, seen  
to the bottom through.  
You, shaped by the haul,  
a rope runs through, brings  
you (to where is light  
traveling?) to you,  
filled with the clear  
scent of pines, diamond-  
round of water.

## Out-Around

Striations fan out-  
around the black  
well. Pines around  
the corridor, corridor of  
your eye moving. (Light,  
you approaching the shape  
of your looking: Hall of eye,  
your eye.) Behind your gaze  
the trees are moving.



## Toward An Identity

Grey wind, sky tied in smooth. Grey, blue,  
soft white, knot above me.

\*

Yarn moves through, telescopes  
through, pulls: what  
did you say, once,  
about them.

\*

I found a red tree, half green,  
green nestled among the green of  
a neighbor tree, the other side  
with limbs tipped in yellow.  
Not far off, a slender tree cannot  
decide between green or yellow.  
Three, four yards away, an entirely  
green tree, flat-hanging leaves.  
    Behind all of these,  
    a very tall pine,  
    needles too dense, too  
    green they are almost black.

\*

Taken as a type of whiteness, white  
marble marking a period of time: when.  
Am I rendered dim now, by leaves of  
the laurel, where once I stood –

but what is abandoned becomes  
abandon: was, articulated.

\*

I weave a sense of time through  
my hair I weave a sense of time through  
my hair I weave a sense of leaves through  
my significant hair I weave the laurel leaves  
through my hair I weave a whitening marble  
through what you did how you said who I was  
I held my own hand once when once you were  
gone I wove a sense of time through where you  
were you a memory before I was.

March. Monday.

Big as a ship some nights,  
her largest window  
when she wanders toward it  
like a captured siren,  
and later remembers as though  
it did not really happen,  
cannot hold the moon it is so large  
over the ground, like standing  
beneath a maple leaf.  
This fissure in her night-  
time cannot be grasped as  
she grasps herself – this, no  
reason for the red to be so  
pronounced in its coming  
forth from the grey-green  
of the leaves beside her.  
One, cupped toward the edges  
of itself, like a folded hand  
folded out in sleep, the twitching  
of unconscious wings, falls  
like the light of a passing  
car, and the time it took  
between sounds of breaking and  
ending was the size of thought  
in her mind, the balled up scarf  
of possibility stuffed into the purse  
of her tongue with no one there  
to loosen it – no reason, she tells  
the dark-wood bed-stand that lifts  
the plant above its leaf,  
no reason to speak.

Tuesday.

The sky is sealing over  
into a fur of grey. A core of  
cold lining the air. Someone  
mentions rain upon the grey  
walkway, the whole city, pulling  
fur collars closer to unweathered-  
white skin, prepares and does not  
notice the glass drift shard by shard,  
the sun falling vertically down,  
like a woman fainting into the ocean  
of planetary moons. She drifts  
like a piece of paper dropped  
from an airplane.

Wednesday.

Pressed against their own skin,  
bruised by opal stretches  
barely noticeable, the violence  
to become violet; the grape trembles  
against the grape, full of moths,  
full of gasps as mouths are. At night  
an ermine light holds amongst them.  
They sit within themselves  
as sleepers do. The open window  
draws the blanket higher, draws  
dream up like water – she still  
is catching, light in her dark nets.

Thursday.

Her body dusky, she tries to shake  
from her skin this weight  
like tree bark. She the thin, un-  
lit wick, inside the scree, wax,  
mountain, avalanche  
a forest of trees upon her.

One by many the green limbs  
like finger tips whisper  
along the inside walls  
of she who is sleeping.

\*

Every bird around her is the color  
and shape of curtains, the pulp  
of an island sunset, seeped through with  
the liquid feather of flamingoes, water  
wafting streams slowly up from silk.  
Orange wakes her like a sturdy breath  
she had been cultivating for quite some  
time in the pink and sleeping orchard  
of her lungs. Her sight is marked by it,  
especially the pale moons that settle  
beneath her eyes the color of lampshades,  
the pale moons that settle above all the fire  
that may emit from the air of gas-soaked rags  
coming from the throat-torch, like a pine  
bursting out of its green body.

Friday.

This row of bones made necessary  
for the carrying of bones beyond  
the bed. The clock, off the wall  
somehow. Sun heavier than sheets  
through the open window. Complex  
mouth, cemeteries measured by  
measures of relation. The carousel of this-  
and-that the same as the desire to close  
the thought and sleep in abstraction,  
their purpose in this, encased amidst soft  
pallets, controlled by hard teeth, these  
composite, unmitigated barriers, voice  
of no retraction.

Saturday.

And all the twitterings of air could be  
his voice, like light moving through  
the throat of a window, as though the only  
frame of existence were perfectly clear, perfectly  
full of him, like the gold ground of leaves  
in the time when all the world is calling  
back to what it is falling into, the brief slant of  
corridor between thin gold like a tremoring bell  
and bars of gold cast into his hands  
as he reaches.



Sunday.

The blue parts of the mind like a melting cup where  
memory is traced by a wheel, the laughing cart of your  
having-been-there with heavy foot pressed, all air beneath  
given up to your tools as you roll away, her life passed  
as your wares: She has stopped on the street corner  
like glass in a window, people all-around her  
spread like cracks. You return with the person reaching  
from behind her now to say her name, for he has been  
following for blocks and just arrived without a breath  
to greet her, but a word, a hand to cause her entire  
body to turn, a moment in gust when strength  
folds and returns.

Monday.

She could spend all time here  
as the balcony. Both ground and  
sky, she moves closer to the  
mouths of trees as they murmur  
what she aims to hear, understands  
already as a lover beside her – it is  
an act of distance. From here  
she sees the blue-  
blue of the longest stars, small  
lanterns the size of her hand  
looking down the ebbing  
tunnel – you so vast and she  
so far, holding the lanterns that have  
long unlatched their tiny black  
hasps and gone out of their glass  
doors, left in place of themselves.

Always the body  
before the name,  
and from this  
always the dark  
absence before the word  
*distance* – you recall  
my entire life to me.

~

## The Horses With Their Pearls

The horses, with their pearls, have stepped out of my mind, the pearls working beneath the black lanterns of their skin, bringing light from motion, as though the smallest moths to exist and still be seen, had gathered white within the pearls inset throughout the interior of black horses, and emerged through a breaking that caused muscles wrought from hooves to move toward me, like the ocean breaking above itself, away from the sun. You may have seen, as you stood like someone who is wanted, looking after the back of the person who wants you, me standing there, (without knowing you were there), the horses that circled toward me before they ran. The moon fell then. I could not see the dark hooves before the clear blue strain of day escape from the landscape I had built around them. Tonight it is as though these pearls that fill the horses are waiting, as though they, all the horses, are waiting upon your sleeping lip, trembling like water, waking you to speak from my memory, rupturing the cold case I had put you in, un-knowing the place where I had you next to me.

## Resurrective Ear, Memory

Resurrective ear, memory-  
tome, tomb open, I  
remember the un-  
done – lettered tongue  
heavy, sea to shore  
I wait for. Air un-lift  
this need, anvil it  
down to a place more  
tangible, letting lettered  
breath, full, murmur up  
to your ear, as air inside  
the bones of a bird.  
Water-boned, breathing  
like a broken tongue,  
I am inside haunted  
sails, haunted by  
air, bone, smell of  
bone, I move through  
myself like ships move  
through water, like ice  
moving through water  
in heft, bodies of  
ice, ships of water  
peeling back the ice.  
Out of water-air, ship of air  
rising where I once was,  
where I still, my hands  
part my body, find I am  
as I felt, full of the susurrous  
sound through seashells, full  
of the shells themselves.

## Flood-Well Of Where-You-Were

Flood-well of where-you-were  
I kiss your dark forehead and still  
there is rain in the center like liquid  
air inside a prophet's bowl of  
glass, hands around the glass (I hold  
your glacial irises as though  
I held petals of water and  
the light they held was held  
in your eyes as they grew  
there), as fire turns the gaze  
clear, as fire in the water  
fire brings may play out in  
your eye, the way my hold  
does, the way glass tells  
its time. Walls of ash, bed down  
around my ankles – I wade  
where it all once was before  
the silver within the flame  
came bursting out of its  
center as blue-white  
chrysanthemum.

## When Held Up To The Light

When held up to the light,  
slowly you are the end

that fails, spooling, out  
like ribbon undone from

your hair, wind – like thick-  
opaed fruit, your body beneath

warm water clear. Scribed, testaments  
around you, collected swan

of God, gold-edges seeping  
like water away from day, until

all this is swollen by the dark river of  
trees against the ether – you are un-

blank paper folding, whisper  
of surrounding centers, orbit and

(occurring void, centers open)  
time scaled just to reach you –

You tremor into morning as though  
you were already waiting there.

## Through The Telescope

Through the telescope  
there is a rose – I am  
long from you  
in this quick change  
of petals within a breath.  
(Is it the air from  
your tongue or hand  
by which I am touched?)  
Fragile curve, weight of  
vanishing, pricked often  
enough and this sky could  
shatter and shatter around  
us, like a broken beaded dress  
of red. (Will we climb toward  
the air hovering above us?) How  
to leave the dry sea  
bed where lava rose. We  
unpeel, petal by red  
petal. Mare rose. Clear  
in our vases. Green  
stemming from my iris. In  
you, I may magnify.



## Inside A Clear Globe Of Clear Glass

Inside a clear globe of clear glass  
there is a blue rose, which rests there

like an open door with no breeze  
to move it from the sun. There is a blue rose

in a walled garden tended by  
crystal muzzles. The horses breathe

so gently upon the blue rose  
many say they have seen the blue

rose at night in the hair of she  
who tends the breath of horses, she

who wove her own hair into  
her silver skin from the light that hangs

down from the moon, there is a blue rose  
that opens behind you when

you come to me from a place un-  
seen, un-done. We speak

roses from thorns. Our hearts the rolled up  
pits of gossamer on the garden wall.

Yet the wind still throws the blue  
rose about itself, we still

look to the center of the rose, wait  
to see the other's eyes open,

a blue nest of breaths caught  
at the sight and opening.

## Where The Eye Exhales

Where the eye exhales,  
the tangled web diminishes,  
and we breathe, unobstructed,  
all gossamer and rain  
between us broken  
out of, and lifted. We wait  
no more inside the white  
breathing, warm clouds  
that harden into a throat-  
string of small words choking  
as they cool. You hold each  
pearl in your mouth to warm it,  
the way you hold each hair  
of mine in your hand under  
the moon to weigh me by.  
I wear you in a planetary  
manner of measured distance.  
The whole occurs between us –  
seamless, I am an altered mirror  
in conversation as you are.

## I Took You As A Rose And Kept You

I took you as a rose and kept you  
petal by petal, the dwindle of long  
distance between you and me. (In that  
thorn-thick space, insurmountable  
desire, hands that must continually  
touch, as a point of reference, as words  
build excited in the throat, and let go.)  
You have a bird in your throat, and  
it batters, frenzied, the chords – you  
cannot speak. Our hair flat like petals,  
we have been in this rain of light  
an incalculable pirouette of hours.  
Now we are pointed and do not  
fall down. We send ourselves back  
to air, an eddy unto our syncopated  
selves; and if we turn to see each  
other in mid-air, were we ever  
on the ground.

## In The Wide-Blade Wind

In the wide-blade wind  
the grasses sharpen  
themselves, the slow-  
swing sound of time  
sawed by the second  
hand sawing into our  
hour of hours you must  
believe in, the sky of  
wing upon wing  
couched around you,  
speaks behind your  
ear, a hand coming  
to reach you, a wind  
in the house of where  
we stand, forceless  
against it. (*Once* was  
held in your ear  
like a wing passing,  
*once* was a word in  
the ear of your looking,  
where *we* were welded,  
where you saw, and looking,  
said, in the middle of  
my gaze, *I exist*.)

Body of Glass. The Paperweight.

Snowmeadow-sky, caught eternal, caught up  
in a white tree, a white kite, tangled in the white armed  
avenues, bones of the tree, spread out, a landscape within  
the white-cased land, no escape of white but the smoke of  
smoke that the tree becomes, moving as if it were  
silver twisting invisible into white, becoming a part  
of the meadow curved vertical between ground and sky.  
You are all around, (how invisible the boundary) a waking dream.  
Also beyond, into a place this place knows not, preface to perfection  
only dreamt of. Contained, you are a bottle of stars  
across the black sky, soft white  
becoming blue, your gaze  
a canopy, laid down.

How like a woman you are, full of clouds. How like a clear  
loaf of bread, round perfectly, ready there, waiting  
to be taken in hand and broken.

At night you remain a window  
through the darkness, the cloak around you pricked  
in flakes, punched out in the shape of an orb.

You are the body lost, come down from  
the sky. Now resting removed,  
you are the door to see through,  
never open. Tiny vault, inviolate.

Perfectly, light casts from your unbending head.

What if, set out in the rain, a neon overcame you  
with shining, as though before, but not knowing before, knowing  
now, you had been covered with a thousand thin veils, transparent,  
pressed with one hundred round palms, shaped  
by all the hand that held you once, then went  
aching towards another, smudging  
your otherwise glistening surface, the distance  
from here to the end filling up with the words  
*to want, need to touch.*  
How would the rain feel along your spine? Cool as glass  
or cooler. Would the effect be  
your breath, taken sharply as pines  
pulled taut in colder weather, the way you straighten,  
press into your desire the moment it touches you and knows  
it has you, knows the *you* of you has become  
*mine*. Your solitude mortal.

The ink recedes, decrescendos, disappears  
like the back of someone walking away, someone  
walking out the door, not coming back the same,  
coming back different, not the original idea, but altered,  
blurred (like vision), significantly less. This is memory.  
This is the end. Because everything before was wasted.  
Here, *later* and *soon* are the same. Inside here, *here* turns  
upon itself. How long before the atmosphere allows patterning  
beyond the outside whim of hands? How long before  
what falls may gather? May not only gather but  
gather once and one hundred times more to build  
a snow man, an ice field, some deep ore to tap.  
How long until what is wanted is unhad? Until all this.  
Until all this reveals, emerging out of the heritable moment  
happening upon the heritable moment, smothering and  
smothering, until life turns blue, rapt in the following.  
How long will it last, how long is it until  
the answer disappears with the question?

There is the white noise of snow like pages.  
The dream each time, serial.



Inside the mind of the blind, something moves the way they imagine  
smoke moves across a black sea, a vast, mind-vast, glass black sea.  
It traverses, blown with the same air that may set sail to ships  
whose sails are the same color, that same color of smoke no one here has  
seen. It blows towards. Towards the blind bears snow lifting as smoke  
from the lifting head. Empty wings (what they carry invisible) come quickly  
across the black sea, photographic negative of non-  
existence. Blind-and-snow felt,

that silence in their ears is the silence of what could be there,  
held in the corridor, like a glass ship sailing  
back off the edge of the world.

## The Glass Paperweight

White hung from  
white sky-of-sky, sky  
tapped from the outside.  
Source encountered  
for the innumerable-  
numbered flakes falling  
like the second hand upon  
the clock tower, face covered,  
other two hands taken  
by ice. This small hand passes  
over in measures. By measures  
the city has been translated, green-  
numbered needles shortening to  
a system of science or heaven.  
Those sleeping wake. They will try,  
since words try, to arrest  
apprehension from white.  
Light comes spinning gold-  
white scatters across the white  
ground. (Not the precious glass  
over the unrelenting floor. The air  
before it happens. The corridor  
of waiting inside the eye.) Broken,  
the light, and through itself unified  
by its brokenness: The light in sheets  
prowls lateral, then moves as  
realization up to the white-  
faced bringing those awake  
looking out their window  
from a timeblack ore  
gold to build the basis.

## Benthic

The graves in grumbling truce  
approach in stolid steps the shore, the cliff waves  
snowy on their precipice before falling. Grey cornets flock themselves  
across the grey sky, over the grey mash of compounds.  
There is a murmur that comes again, and draws back slowly.

Fishermen are pulling in their nets,  
the muscular sun clenching and unfolding  
as they haul the water through. All the rest  
remains unsettled, and settled by this alone.  
Through the air, perfect with their concentration, they cannot see  
the specific strangers, down the shore, on the sand.

Red horses heave their hooves of ruby.  
Down shore, the strange scurrying, fishermen laughing  
as their nets slip away in their laughing; they in ash  
with red hands; the red horses, in their tide, being finished; and  
the golden carousel of noon continuing its approach.

## Still It Was

Still it was  
unfinished, still the sky  
stood moving

the sky. It hung  
hanging traces,  
an engram

remaining –  
the center  
grasped (knob

turned), it opened  
its hand  
and still

the color rested  
in its palm. It reached  
as when

you touched  
my spine and I  
turned to see

the silhouette  
trees, space  
receding (and form

came), the stars  
flushed from  
their spaces, un-

folding  
a startled flock  
inside your eyes.